

Young Christian Parents, Enjoy Your Children

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I was on the couch reading some relatively important emails that had been piling up from the other elders I serve with, and I couldn't focus. My 15-month-old had decided that there was nothing more interesting or important in the universe of our living room than climbing onto my head. With a fistful of T-shirt and one leg up on the cushion, he attempted the ascent toward my face, over and over. Forget the emails, I had to defend myself.



At first I tried the arm-bar, but he could still reach my shirt. So I countered with a leg maneuver, which left his little hands flailing, and solved the clothing issue. But, I couldn't concentrate on my work while I tried to keep my leg correctly suspended. Finally, I said in a tone a little too harsh, "Stop it and sit down!" He promptly obeyed, and I turned my gaze back to my phone. And then I looked at him. His searching eyes didn't understand. "Daddy, we play like this all the time, why did you make me stop?" "Daddy, when you lie down on the couch, that is code for 'Please climb on me', isn't it?" My son had a point. So, we played for a little while before I went back to work—and it made me smile.

Now, I am not trying to speak against training your kids to leave you alone when necessary, or to always capitulate to their momentary needs. We need more of that, not less. But what I am saying is this—take time to enjoy your children, even if it seems inconvenient.

Busyness is normal

The dishes need to be washed, the laundry seems to be miraculously multiplying like Galilean fish, and you haven't had a chance to shower yet because the little people decided to get up early *again*. I hear you, Mom.

The miniature jungle you've mistakenly been referring to as a lawn should have been mowed two days ago, you've been asked to stay late at work *again* this week, and the bills stacked up on the counter won't stamp and address themselves. I hear you, Dad.

Your inability to fit everything into a perfectly formulated schedule isn't a unique experience. There is always something to do. Laugh with your children anyway. Embrace the season of life that God has put you in, and make time in your day to play and smile with your kids.

Me-time is overrated

It is hard to believe, but it's really true. I have had to learn this lesson more than once: greater joy is found when you generously spend yourself for others, not when you hold back.

At the heart of Christianity is Jesus, and he gave his life for others. We never say, "Thank you Jesus for taking time away from us so that you could relax and get it together." Now, I know that there is none like Jesus and that he did sleep, eat and maintain his body to some extent—but sometimes he stayed up all night in prayer, went without food, and in the end offered up his body as a sacrifice. And we should be like him.

He won the affection of his children by giving his life for them, so that they would enter into his joy and rest forever. As we follow Christ, that same self-giving will accompany us, and it should come out often toward our kids.

Your kids remember time you spend with them

I can't tell you how many loads of dirty laundry were left undone in my childhood—maybe none, maybe quite a few. I don't remember when the grass got too long or when a project was left for the next day or week. But I do remember playing ball in the front yard and wrestling on the floor with my Dad. I remember long games of Monopoly Jr. with my Mom during the day, and I'm sure she had "better" things to do.

I didn't care about the state of the house, the stressors in my parents' lives, or how tired they were from a long day. I cared about the time spent with me. I could tell they enjoyed having me as a son, and that brought *me* joy.

I know that you have to get things done everyday, and that the thought of leaving something important unfinished—even for a moment—may put some of you over the edge. Do it anyway. God gave these precious children to you to raise and teach, yes, but also as a blessing from Him. A gift. Enjoy the gift, and watch how that enjoyment spills over into joyful attitudes in your kids.